

INDIAN PROBLEMS

№ 2

INDIA'S SCIENTIFIC FRONTIER

WHERE IS IT? WHAT IS IT?

COLONEL H. B. HANNA

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The last of the Series of
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WAR
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INDIAN PROBLEMS

NO. II

India's Scientific Frontier

WHERE IS IT? WHAT IS IT?

BY

COLONEL H. B. HANNA

BENGAL STAFF CORPS (RETIRED)
LATE COMMANDING AT DELHI
AUTHOR OF "CAN RUSSIA INVADE INDIA?"

*SKELETON MAP SHOWING FRONTIERS OF 1876
AND 1895 AT END OF BOOK*

Westminster

ARCHIBALD CONSTABLE AND COMPANY

14 PARLIAMENT STREET S-W

1895

"If the course of events should ever bring us to a struggle with the Northern Power on our Indian Frontier, the winning side will be the one which refrains from entangling itself in the barren mountains which now separate the two Empires"

Sir John Lawrence

"Why advance beyond the mountains forming our present strong frontier, and make the difficult accessory zones in advance the principal field of operations, thereby complicating our strategic difficulties and doubling the extent of our theatre of operations?"

Sir Peter Lumsden

"Let but things go against the occupying army for a few weeks, or even days, and the whole country would be up and swarming like a hive of bees round the perplexed detachments of the invader"

Sir Reynell Taylor

P R E F A C E

IN publishing the second of my Indian Problem Tracts, I think I may congratulate myself on the weakness of the criticisms to which its predecessor has been subjected. I will take one typical instance, and ask my readers to believe me when I say that every attempt that has been made to impugn the accuracy of my facts and figures and the correctness of the conclusions which I have drawn from them, is as hollow and misleading as the one which I am now about to expose.

In an article on "Can Russia Invade India?" which appeared on the 18th of June, the *Pall Mall Gazette* accused me of grossly exaggerating the transport difficulties against which a Russian invasion of India would have to struggle, and triumphantly cut down the 2,000,000 mules which I had shown would be needed to carry the supplies of an army

of 150,000 men from Kandahar to Multan, to one fourth that number. But how was this reduction accomplished? Why, by taking as the basis of comparison, not the facts of Sir John Keene's march from Sukkar to Kandahar, but those of Sir Frederick Roberts' march from Kabul to Kandahar. Now the latter march was made under conditions exceptionally favourable, even as regards that particular route, and such as never have or ever can occur in the Bolan road. The column, consisting of 9,987 men of all ranks, had with it no wheeled carriage, only mountain guns; no pontoon train, no sappers, and only a small reserve of engineers' equipments, and hardly any quarter-master's stores, these latter being forwarded from Sibi to the troops at Kandahar. Moving at the best season of the year through a country whose military strength had been completely broken by Sir Donald Stewart—that country the granary of Afghanistan—it not only suffered no delays from vicissitudes of climate or the attacks of the inhabitants, but was able to depend entirely upon the fields of half-ripened corn which bordered the road for fodder for the cavalry horses and transport animals, and so largely upon the villages near

which they passed for its own food and the food of its camp-followers, that it only took with it five days' supply of bread-stuffs of all kinds.

Now, does the *Pall Mall Gazette* really believe that an advance upon British India can be conducted in such light marching order? And whether it does or does not believe this, am I not justified in preferring my own method of comparing like with like, and of carefully enquiring into all the conditions under which any given military movement has been, or will have to be, carried out, to my critic's plan of comparing like with unlike, and neglecting to ascertain, or, if ascertained, neglecting to mention, the conditions which constitute the unlikeness?

H. B. HANNA

55 PARLIAMENT STREET
LONDON S.W

August 1 1895

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